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Shredding Light

BARE KNUCKLE JUGGERNAUT MISHA MANSOOR SIGNATURE HUMBUCKERS By Eric Kirkland

THE TRADITIONAL APPROACH to creating high-gain pickups involved overwinding coils around heavy ceramic magnets. This flame-thrower style of design is terrific for figuratively frying everything in the sonic path, but it noticeably decreases clarity, pick attack and dynamics, sacrificing musicality for the sake of intensity and volume.

Bare Knuckle's new, hand-wound Juggernaut humbuckers—the signature pickup of Periphery's virtuoso guitarist, Misha "Bulb" Mansoor—combine power and refinement equally, making them perfect for drop-tuned low notes and delivering the complex midrange and uncompressed pick attack preferred by today's multi-genre artists.

FEATURES Bare Knuckle employs a lot of vintage mojo in all of its pickups. The bobbins are made from celluloid butyrate; the tapped pole screw holes and maple spacers ensure a solid assembly; the nickel-silver humbucker bases are made in-house; and the coils are scatter wound for an organic and detailed response.

Many of today's manufacturers wind their coils asymmetrically, so that one coil is producing more of the basic tone while the other is fine tuning elements of sound while reducing or cancelling hum. Rather than use offset coil winds, Bare Knuckle's Juggernaut utilizes traditional, symmetrically wound coils to eliminate all hum—something that is key

for high-gain pickups—and then brilliantly tailors the bridge pickup's personality with a combination of Alnico V and Ceramic VIII magnets. A custom-sized Alnico V makes it possible for the neck-position Juggernaut to achieve compatible qualities of warmth and dynamics without the use of ceramics.

The pickups come standard with four-conductor wires for series humbucking, parallel humbucking or coil-splitting wiring schemes. Six-, seven- and eight-string versions are available, as are numerous cover styles, including basic black, burnt chrome, camo and a custom-etched "Bulb" design in honor of Mansoor.

PERFORMANCE Many high-output pickups lack natural, open-sounding midrange, but not the Juggernauts. These pickups are engaging and warm, with copious even-order harmonics in the low mids and more odd-order overtones in the upper mids, making it possible to create sweet tones when softly picking or aggressive, chirping attack when digging in. Frankly, I can't remember when I've heard this much high-end slice from an Alnico-based, neck-position humbucker.

Lows are similarly tight and controlled when you pick hard or palm mute, but they don't lose their musical elasticity or intonation when called upon to deliver more serene passages, even when your low string is tuned down to B. Instead of driving certain frequencies, as singularly focused pickups do, the Juggernauts have a multifaceted character and a noiseless, "black" background that allows the guitar and amp's harmonics to shine. Bear in mind, these pickups are not going to help you sound like Albert Collins or Van Halen—the Juggernauts have a PhD in tonal complexity and are best suited to the modern guitarist who wants to paint with omnipresent clarity and a full palette of tonal hues, whether through a bone-dry clean rig or an insanely distorted super stack.

CHEAT SHEET



LIST PRICE Starting at £114 (about \$190)
MANUFACTURER Bare Knuckle Pickups Ltd., bareknucklepickups.co.uk

- A combination of Alnico V and ceramic VIII magnets give the bridge-position Juggernaut a rich midrange voice, taut lows and far-reaching highs.

- Ideally wound coils and specially sized Alnico V magnets help the neck position Juggernaut produce sweet tones that are simultaneously punchy and sharp.

- **THE BOTTOM LINE** Like the scintillating exhaust note of a Ferrari California, Bare Knuckle's Misha Mansoor signature Juggernaut humbuckers turn sheer power into nuanced art.